

Title IX by Committee

Way Better than it Sounds

The Alma College Civil Rights/Title IX Team



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- We encourage all attendees to understand that focus and engagement can look and feel different for each individual, and that while unfamiliar behaviors may sometimes be initially distracting, they are not intentionally disruptive.
- This space should feel comfortable and accessible. If you have any concerns with accessibility, please let Central Office know as soon as possible.



Civil Rights & Title IX Team

Deputy Civil Rights/Title IX Coordinators

Civil Rights/Title IX Coordinator



Dave Blandford
Director of Student Engagement



Alice Kramer
Assistant VP for Student
Engagement



Dr. Jonathan Glenn
Director of Diversity & Inclusion



Dr. Kelley A. Peatross
Vice President for Human
Resources



Dr. Bri Harfmann
Associate Professor I.P.H.S.



Kiana Verdugo
Associate Athletic Director
for Compliance & Operations



ALMA COLLEGE

About Alma College

- Small private liberal arts college located in rural Michigan (1400 students)
- 4 year residential (94% of students live on campus all four years)
- PWI
- 70% of students are student-athletes
- 30% of students belong to are part of fraternity/sorority life
- 28% of students identify as LGBTQ+



ALMA COLLEGE

Impacts of Civil Rights/Title IX

- Residence Halls and other campus housing
- Athletics
- Employment
- Marginalized Populations
- Classroom
- Social and Well-Being
- Retention



What Prompted Our Approach

- Two failed searches for a Civil Rights/Title IX Coordinator
- Post-Covid job market
- Burnout
- Need to better serve our students
- Need for a model built around establishing rapport and relationships
- Need for increased support for difficult/time consuming investigations
- Desire to have a team-oriented approach and support



What if...

- We approached things differently
- Create a cross campus team of at least 5 maintaining the trust and relationship(s) with our campus community
- College must invest in high level training for members of the team
- Team members must be able to support all facets of the Civil Rights/Title IX process
- College must partner with a third party for those cases where bias exists, or the investigation would be deemed overly burdensome to the team



Team Representatives

- Student Affairs
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Human Resources
- Academic Affairs
- Athletics



Funding This New Model

- The team is funded using a budget neutral approach using the salary/budget from the previous Civil Rights/Title IX Coordinator
- The team is made up of current leaders on campus, who can leave at any time, but are provided a stipend for their work
- Some funding is set aside specifically for our partnership with Grand River Solutions, our third-party partner
- Additional cost savings is used towards training



How the Team Functions

- All Civil Rights/Title IX complaints are managed in the Guardian case management software
- The team meets weekly to discuss case management, training, on-going campus issues
- Each member of the team may be asked to serve as a coordinator, investigator, hearing officer, appeal officer, advisor, or as a consultant on any case
- Additionally, the team provides training for campus employees and informational sessions to our students on awareness and process



Sharing the Workload

• Student Case Sample:

- Dave coordinates and runs intake
- Bri investigates with support from a trained non-team member
- Jon advises the student
- Alice chairs the hearing panel
- Kiana recuses due to relationship with one of the parties
- Kelley chairs the appeal

• Employee Case Sample:

- Alice coordinates and runs intake
- Dave investigates
- Bri advises the complainant
- Kelley chairs the hearing panel
- Jon sits on the hearing panel
- Kiana chairs the appeal



Engaging Campus Partners

- We provide training for any faculty/staff on campus interested in serving as advisors/investigators/hearing panel members
- We currently have 13 faculty/staff who can serve different roles within the process (primarily serve as advisors)
- Referring cases to other offices when appropriate
 - Student Conduct
 - HR
 - Provost
- Each team member can act as a liaison with their campus area or other areas with established connections



Why this Team Model Works

- Trust
- No personal goals overriding team goals
- Shared values
 - Preventing and repairing harm
 - Constantly striving to improve ourselves and our campus
 - Improving inclusion – beyond lip service
 - People centered (staff or student)
 - Genuine vested interest
 - Establishing a safe environment for all
 - Respecting and valuing the differences amongst our community members
- (Appropriate) laughter
- Taking time to celebrate each other
- Finding satisfaction in a job well done
- Title IX and Civil Rights can be isolating, as a team we can always show up as our best selves for those involved



Successes

- The time to resolve cases has been significantly reduced
- Improved communication and reporting from faculty and staff
- Have created a robust set of alternative resolutions
- Allows those going through the process some choice in working with people they feel comfortable
- Allows for creating problem solving/parsing out non-Title IX issues
- Diversifies the skill sets, expertise, and identities represented on the team
- Cross-campus representation on the team
- The team genuinely enjoys spending time together
- Aligns with campus philosophy to create network of support for students, faculty, and staff
- Proactively identifying problems



Challenges

- Avoiding overburdening folks with in-demand identities
- Determining best ways to partner with our third party
- Replacing team members when they leave
 - Careful balance between politics, representation, and team fit
- Patience with larger campus governance issues
- In-demand problem solvers
- Drawing boundaries around our work and scope
- Finding the right amount and types of training for campus
- Beliefs and values of college don't always align with the larger community



Looking Ahead

- Addressing chronic campus concerns
- Tackling long-held traditions that no longer serve students, faculty, and staff
- Maintaining our improved consistency
- Evolving our relationship with our third-party partner
- Keeping a focus on professional development
- EVEN IF we were able to hire a single coordinator, we would keep this model instead



Questions?

For more information feel free to contact anyone on our team:

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